

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS™



the PENUMBRA

ECLIPSE COMICS • P. O. BOX 199 • GUERNEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95446

ON THE RACKS

SCOUT no. 8

Scout fights the final monster, and a mysterious messiah appears!

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS no. 7

Two stories by Bruce Jones, with Bo Hampton & Chuck Beckum art.

KITZ 'N' KATZ no. 3

The katz go on a crazy trip to Bigtown! Plus, the threat of Robokat!

THE NEW WAVE no. 1 and 2

The first two bi-weekly issues are on sale this month. Only 50 cents! Meet new heroes and the great beginning of a new universe!

JOHNNY HAZARD no. 7 and 8

Two more magazine-sized collections of the classic adventure series.

SALOME no. 1

The man who baptized Jesus Christ faces death at the hands of an evil woman. By P. Craig Russell.

CROSSFIRE & RAINBOW no. 1

Now at a lower price! A 4-part mini-series begins with "This Is Your Sex Life, Jay Endicott!"

CHAMPIONS no. 1

For the first time ever in comics — the role playing characters come to life!

ADOLESCENT RADIOACTIVE BLACK-BELT HAMSTERS 3-D

Your favorite furry creatures in their first 3-D adventure!

WHODUNNIT? no. 1

Be the first to solve the mystery and WIN \$1,000.00! Cash.

WORLD OF WOOD no. 3 and 4

The final 2 issues in this superb collection of Wally Wood art!

MIRACLEMAN no. 8

With a new framing sequence, 2 stories from Miracleman's "past." Plus, The New Wave preview!

NEW DNAGENTS no. 9

The startling conclusion to the tale of Venimus!

DEAD REDS: As I sit down to write, news has come of a nuclear power "accident" in Russia, with the dead numbered at either two (what the soviets are saying) or in the thousands (reports gathered from ham radio operators in the area). Radioactive waste is spewing into our atmosphere, 49,000 human beings in the immediate vicinity were not evacuated until they'd been exposed to hazardous levels of radioactivity for 36 hours due to soviet government foul-ups, all the animals within an 18 mile radius of the plant were destroyed because they were "contaminated," warnings have been issued in some Eastern European countries that rainwater and milk are unfit to drink and that people should avoid conceiving children until radiation levels drop, a group of American bone marrow transplant experts have been flown to Russia to try to save the "operable cases" of radiation contamination, the town of Pripyat (25,000 inhabitants) is abandoned, the Pripyat River is in danger of contaminating the Dnieper River and thence the water supply of Kiev, and on page four of my daily newspaper, a long article by American nuclear power "experts" tells me that not only are we all perfectly safe, but "it couldn't happen here."

I despise liars.

Meanwhile, not a single comic book company is taking out ads to eulogize dead Russians the way they did for the dead Challenger space shuttle crew. Maybe 'cause they're reds and this is a cold war, or maybe 'cause we like our dead heroes to be killed quickly, cleanly and in a blaze of glory — but for whatever reason, nobody is out there shedding tears for the firefighters who tried to contain the nuclear plant inferno ("30 meter high flames," according to the soviet news agency, Tass) while they sank into liquifying asphalt.

Does it matter that they were commies? Does it matter that they were victims of the most massive totalitarian slave-state the world

has ever known? Does it matter that they probably believed that Science — that unholy god — was on their side?

I've got news for you, folks: Science isn't on *anybody's* side. Science is just the most workable way to learn about that thing us aging hipsters laughingly call "reality." The Laws of Science bind us to ourselves, and we can never escape. Among the Laws are these: Hydrogen is quite explosive . . . and nuclear radiation is deadly. Hydrogen can be harnessed, through containment, but accidents will happen and people can die if they're involved in a hydrogen explosion. Nuclear radiation can be harnessed through containment too, but accidents will happen, and people can die if they're involved in a nuclear explosion, plant meltdown, radiation link, or contamination by fallout.

Consider the odds . . . i don't know about you, but i'd feel safer aboard a space shuttle right now than downwind from Chernobyl. Nuclear power will NEVER be safe. It's too bad so many reds had to die to prove that simple scientific law.

catherine yronwode

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS™ no. 7, June 1986. Published by Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 199, Guerneville, CA 95446. Catherine Yronwode, Editor. Sean Deming, Associate Editor. Dean Mullaney, Publisher. Cover art ©1986 Corey Wolfe. "Picture You and Me": story ©1986 Bruce Jones. Art ©1986 Chuck Beckum. "Under Tartuk": story ©1986 Bruce Jones. Art ©1986 Bo Hampton. "It Happened This Morning": story and art ©1986 Rick Geary. "So You Want To Be In Pictures": story ©1986 Douglas M. Wheeler. Art ©1986 Richard Howell. All other material ©1986 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved. The stories, characters and events in this magazine are fictional. Film by SM Graphics. Printed in Canada.

TARTUKA STOOD AS IT HAD ALWAYS
STOOD, HIGH, IMPASSIVE, BLACK AND
LINEHEEDING...

IT HAD STOOD THAT WAY
FOR A MILLION CENTUR-
IES AND MIGHT STAND
FOR A MILLION MORE.

UNDER TARTUKA

UNDER ITS CRAGGY, EBON
PEAKS IT HAD WITNESSED
THE CRIMSON TURMOIL OF
FOUR THOUSAND SEP-
ARATE CONFLICTS, FOUGHT
OVER A SCORE OF WAR-
WEARY GENERATIONS.

SOMETIMES THE DUST AND
SMOKE AND GREEN PALL
OF RADIATION ROSE SO
HIGH IT THREATENED TO
ECLIPSE EVEN THE LOFTY
SUMMITS OF TARTUKA'S
HIGHEST REACHES.

YET, STILL, AFTER SO MANY
UNVICTORIOUS YEARS,
THE BATTLES RAGED ON.

STILL THEY RAGED ON...

C'MON, C'MON!...
BRING UP THOSE
SUPPLIES, CORPORAL!

WE GOTTA GET UNDER
COVER BEFORE NIGHT-
FALL. YA WANNA GET
US *KILLED*?

I'M :(GASP):
...I'M COMING,
FRANK!

I'M
COMING AS
:(GASP): FAST
AS I CAN!

CAN'T :(GASP):-- CAN'T
GO ANY FARTHER, FRANK!
HELP ME, PLEASE!

ALL RIGHT...
OKAY, THIS
PLACE IS AS
GOOD AS ANY
TO MAKE
CAMP

PRETTY FAIR ROCK COV-
ERAGE... GET A FIRE
STARTED AND I'LL TRY
TO TRACE OUR
LOCATION.

...YES
:(GASP):
JUST LET
ME GET MY
:(GASP):
BREATH...
HUNGRY...
STARVING.



WE HAVE TO CONSERVE FOOD! **BLAST** THIS HAND COMPASS!!

WHAT WE NEED IS A FIELD SPECTROMETER SO WE COULD SEE THE ENTIRE AREA...

HEY, OFF YOUR BUTT, CORPORAL! MOVE!!

YA WANNA DIE OUT HERE IN THE DARK?

... NO, FRANK... I-I'M MOVING ... SEE, I'M DOING IT...

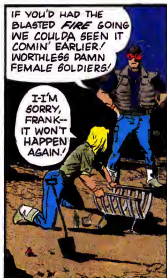


FRANK! EEEEE!!!

DUCK! BUG-BOMB!

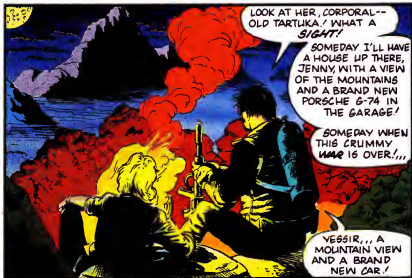


GOT IT!!



IF YOU'D HAD THE BLASTED FIRE GOING WE COULDA SEEN IT COMIN' EARLIER! WORTHLESS DAMN FEMALE SOLDIERS!

I-I'M SORRY, FRANK-- IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN!

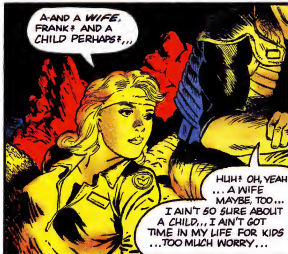


LOOK AT HER, CORPORAL-- OLD TARTUUKA! WHAT A SIGHT!

SOMEDAY I'LL HAVE A HOUSE UP THERE, JENNY, WITH A VIEW OF THE MOUNTAINS AND A BRAND NEW PORSCHE 6-74 IN THE GARAGE!

SOMEDAY WHEN THIS CRUMMY WAR IS OVER!...

YESSIR... A MOUNTAIN VIEW AND A BRAND NEW CAR!



A-AND A WIFE, FRANK? AND A CHILD PERHAPS?...

HUH? OH, YEAH ... A WIFE MAYBE, TOO... I AIN'T SO SURE ABOUT A CHILD... I AIN'T GOT TIME IN MY LIFE FOR KIDS ... TOO MUCH WORRY...

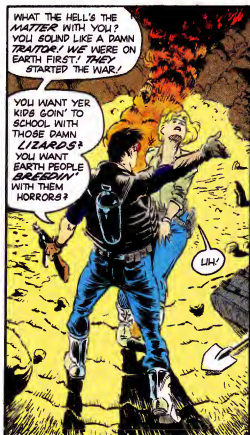


IF THOSE BASTARD GEMLINS WOULD EVER GIVE UP AND GO HOME, I COULD HAVE THAT HOUSE RIGHT NOW!

THEY KNOW THEY'RE BEATEN, WHY DON'T THEY JUST LEAVE?

THEY'VE FOUGHT AS LONG AS WE HAVE ... FOR CENTURIES ...

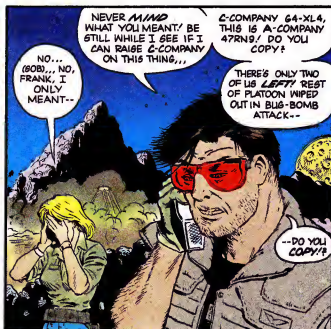
MAYBE THEY FEEL THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO OUR PLANET BY NOW...



WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? YOU SOUND LIKE A DAMN TRAITOR! WE WERE ON EARTH FIRST! THEY STARTED THE WAR!

YOU WANT YER KIDS GOIN' TO SCHOOL WITH THOSE DAMN LIZARDS? YOU WANT EARTH PEOPLE BREEDIN' WITH THEM HORRORS?

WHY!



NEVER MIND WHAT YOU MEANT! BE STILL WHILE I SEE IF I CAN RAISE G-COMPANY ON THIS THING...

NO... (BOB)... NO, FRANK, I ONLY MEANT--

G-COMPANY 64-XL4, THIS IS A-COMPANY 47RNS, DO YOU COPY?

THERE'S ONLY TWO OF US LEFT! REST OF PLATOON WIPED OUT IN BUG-BOMB ATTACK--

--DO YOU COPY?!



SPARROWW!!

FUNNY... THE RELIEF PLATOON SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE PAYS AGO! WHERE THE HELL ARE THEY? MAYBE THEY--

FRANK!!

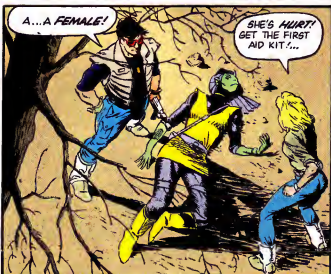


THERE HE GOES! JENNY GET DOWN!!



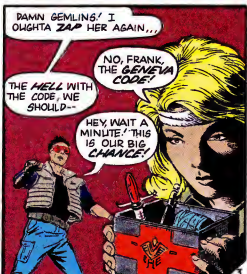
GOT 'IM! YA-HOO!

ZZRACK!!



A...A FEMALE!

SHE'S HURT! GET THE FIRST AID KIT!...

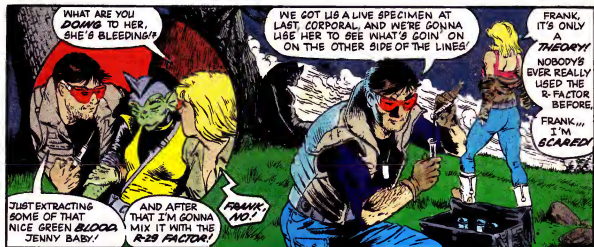


DAMN GEMLINS! I OUGHTA ZAP HER AGAIN...

NO, FRANK, THE GENEVA CODE!

THE HELL WITH THE CODE, WE SHOULD--

HEY, WAIT A MINUTE! THIS IS OUR BIG CHANCE!



I SEEN IT DONE ONCE AT PRINCETON TEN YEARS AGO! IT WORKS ALL RIGHT! AND WE'LL BE THE FIRST TO USE IT IN COMBAT!





THE RAIN!

DEAR GOD,
THE PAIN!



WHO GOES THERE!
NAME AND RANK,
SOLDIER!

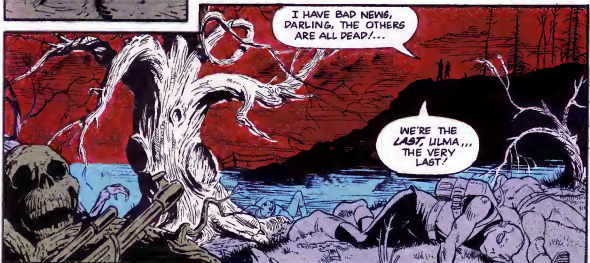
OH, GOD,
ULMA!
IS THAT
YOU?



ULMA, DARLING!
I THOUGHT YOU
WERE DEAD!

WPH!

... I
BEGGED YOU
NOT TO GO
SCOUTING ALONE
BUT YOU'RE
ALL RIGHT AT
LEAST!



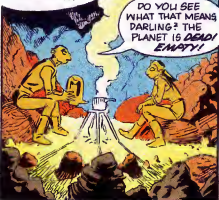
I HAVE BAD NEWS,
DARLING, THE OTHERS
ARE ALL DEAD!...

WE'RE THE
LAST, ULMA...
THE VERY
LAST!

SIT DOWN, DARLING,
AND REST. I'LL FIX YOU
SOMETHING TO EAT, I
SAVED MY RATIONS,
THE LAST OF THEM,
I'M AFRAID...

MORE BAD NEWS,
I FIXED THE RADIO
--ULMA, I CAN'T
RAISE ANYONE
NOT A LIVING
SOUL!

DO YOU SEE
WHAT THAT MEANS,
DARLING? THE
PLANET IS DEAD!
EMPTY!



EMPTY!

ULMA, THE
WAR IS OVER!
OUR PLANET
IS SO BOMBED
OUT THE INVAD-
ERS DIDN'T
WANT IT
ANYMORE!

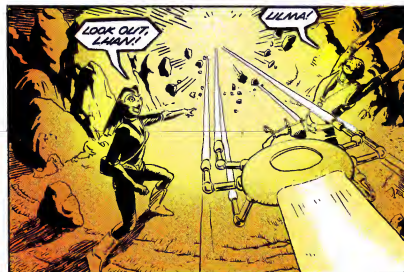
THEY'VE ALL GONE BACK TO
EARTH. I PICKED UP THEIR
VANISHING ROCKET SIGNALS!

I-I DON'T
UNDERSTAND--
THIS... THIS IS
EARTH!... ISN'T
IT?

WHAT??
POOR DARLING,
YOU'RE
DELIRIOUS!



THIS IS
ALTIRA,
DEAREST. THE
EARTHLINGS
WERE THE
AGRESSORS,
REMEMBER!





JENNY? THAT YOU, CORPORAL?

IT'S ME...

DID YOU SEE THE ENEMY? HOW MANY WERE THERE?

THEY'VE ALL LEFT, FRANK, ALL GONE BACK TO EARTH. ALL BUT ONE. THE WAR IS OVER...

THEY LIED TO US, FRANK. WE WERE THE ATTACKERS. WE WERE THE ENEMY. ...OR MAYBE... MAYBE SO MANY CENTURIES PASSED, NOBODY REALLY CARED ANYMORE...

SOMEONE'S BEEN LYING ALL RIGHT!

BACK TO EARTH? ARE YOU *NUTS*?

IF THE WAR IS OVER THEN WHY ARE THE BUG BOMBS STILL ATTACKING?

I DON'T KNOW... MAYBE THE BUG BOMBS WORK AUTOMATICALLY, *INDEPENDENT* OF THEIR CREATORS...

OH, GOD! OH, GOD, SHE'S DEAD!



YOU KILLED HER!! YOU MURDERED HER, YOU BASTARD!

WHY?

SHE WAS OF NO USE TO US. SHE WAS OF NO USE TO *ANYONE*! I PUT HER OUT OF HER MISERY!



WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

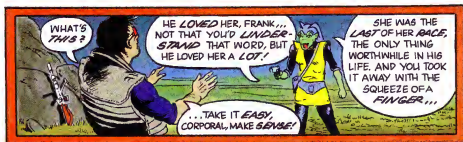
BLURRING HER, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE I'M DOING?

...YEAH, GOOD IDEA, GET RID OF THE STINK. JUST BE *QUICK* ABOUT IT, I'D LIKE SOME *SLEEPER*!

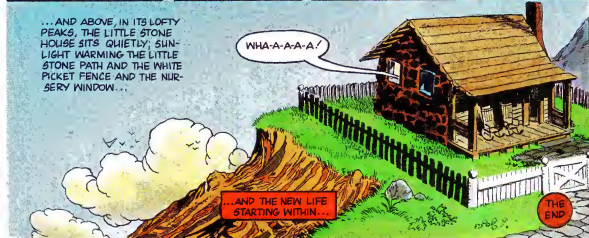


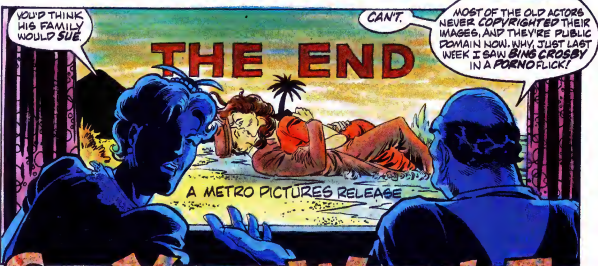
WELL? HOW ABOUT IT? I SAID I'D LIKE SOME *SLEEPER* NOW! YOU GONNA GIVE IT TO ME OR NOT?

I'M GOING TO GIVE IT TO YOU, FRANK...



TARTUKA STANDS AS IT HAS FOR A MILLION CENTURIES... IT MIGHT STAND FOR A MILLION MORE. AT ITS BASE, TWO LONE GRAVE MARKERS SILHOUETTE THE SLOWLY CLEARING HAZE OF SMOKE AND DUST AND RADIOACTIVE DEATH...





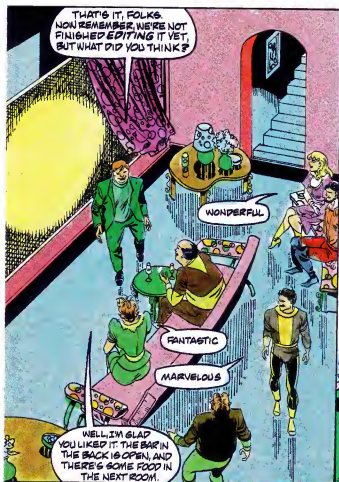
So You Want To Be in Pictures?

WRITER:
DOUGLAS
WHEELER

ARTIST:
RICHARD
HOWELL

LETTERER:
WAYNE
TRUMAN

COLORIST:
TIM
SMITH



THAT'S IT, FOLKS.
NOW REMEMBER, WE'RE NOT
FINISHED EDITING IT YET,
BUT WHAT DID YOU THINK?

WONDERFUL

FANTASTIC

MARVELOUS

WELL, I'M GLAD
YOU LIKED IT. THE BAR IN
THE BACK IS OPEN, AND
THERE'S SOME FOOD IN
THE NEXT ROOM.



I'D
LIKE A
DRINK.

OH, OF COURSE,
I'LL GET SOMETHING
FOR US OVER THERE.
BE RIGHT BACK.



HELLO. WE HAVEN'T BEEN INTRO-
DUCED. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

ELAINE CAMPBELL.

AND THE YOUNG
MAN WITH YOU—I
DON'T BELIEVE
I'VE MET HIM?

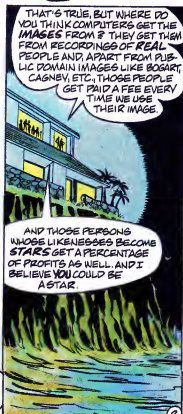
DAVID GEORGE. HE WAS ONE
OF THE ANIMATRONICS PROGRAM-
MERS FOR THIS FILM. AND YOU?



JOHN GARMIRE, CASTING DIR-
ECTOR FOR METRO STUDIOS.
I'VE BEEN WATCHING
YOU ALL NIGHT.

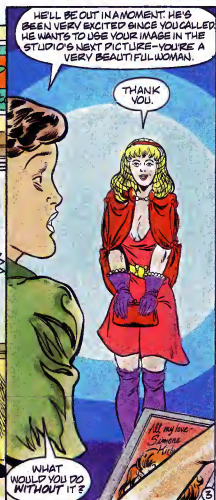
YOU HAVE THE
LOOK WE'VE BEEN SEARCH-
ING FOR FOR OUR NEXT
PICTURE.

I'VE HEARD A LOT OF
PICK-UP LINES BEFORE, BUT
DON'T YOU THINK THAT ONE'S
A BIT DATED? EVERYONE KNOWS
THEY DON'T USE REAL ACTORS IN MOV-
IES ANYMORE—IT'S ALL COMPUTER
GENERATED.



THAT'S TRUE, BUT WHERE DO
YOU THINK COMPUTERS GET THE
IMAGES FROM? THEY GET THEM
FROM RECORDINGS OF REAL
PEOPLE AND, APART FROM PUB-
LIC DOMAIN IMAGES LIKE BOGART,
CAGNEY, ETC., THOSE PEOPLE
GET PAID A FEE EVERY
TIME WE USE
THEIR IMAGE.

AND THOSE PERSONS
WHOSE LIKENESSES BECOME
STARS GET A PERCENTAGE
OF PROFITS AS WELL. AND I
BELIEVE YOU COULD BE
A STAR.



EXCUSE ME?

YOUR BEAUTY—
IT WON'T LAST FOREVER,
YOU KNOW. HAVE YOU EVER
TRIED TO SUPPORT YOUR
SELF WITHOUT IT?



ELAINE! GOOD
TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
COME IN!

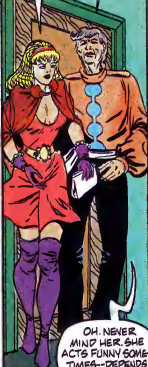
...UM...
YES...
THANK
YOU!



WHAT THE HELL'S WITH HER?

WHO?

YOUR
SECRETARY.

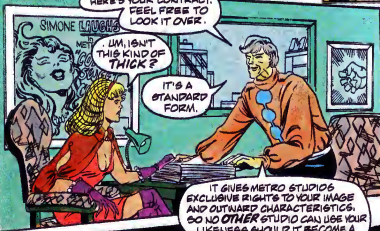


OH. NEVER
MIND HER. SHE
ACTS FUNNY SOME
TIMES--DEPENDS
ON HER MOOD.

HERE'S YOUR CONTRACT.
FEEL FREE TO
LOOK IT OVER.

...UM, ISN'T
THIS KIND OF
THICK?

IT'S A
STANDARD
FORM.

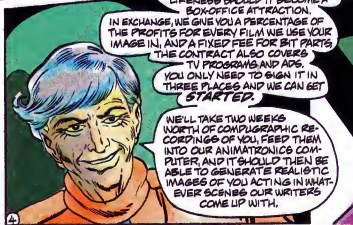


IT GIVES METRO STUDIOS
EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO YOUR IMAGE
AND OUTWARD CHARACTERISTICS.
SO NO OTHER STUDIO CAN USE YOUR
LIKENESS SHOULD IT BECOME A
BOX-OFFICE ATTRACTION.

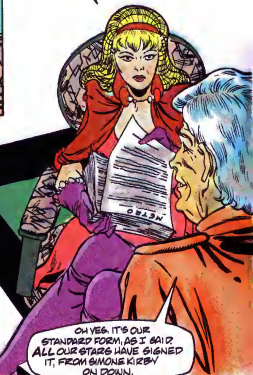
IN EXCHANGE, WE GIVE YOU A PERCENTAGE OF
THE PROFITS FOR EVERY FILM WE USE YOUR
IMAGE IN, AND A FIXED FEE FOR BIT PARTS.
THE CONTRACT ALSO COVERS
TV PROGRAMS AND ADS.
YOU ONLY NEED TO SIGN IT IN
THREE PLACES AND WE CAN GET
STARTED.

WE'LL TAKE TWO WEEKS
WORTH OF COMPUGRAPHIC RE-
CORDINGS OF YOU, FEED THEM
INTO OUR ANIMATRONICS COM-
PUTER, AND IT SHOULD THEN BE
ABLE TO GENERATE REALISTIC
IMAGES OF YOU ACTING IN WHAT-
EVER SCENES OUR WRITERS
COME UP WITH.

YOU'RE SURE
THIS CONTRACT IS
...FAIR?



OH YES. IT'S OUR
STANDARD FORM, AS I SAID.
ALL OUR STARS HAVE SIGNED
IT, FROM SIMONE KIRBY
ON DOWN.





ALL RIGHT, THEN,
I'LL SIGN!

I CAN
HARDLY WAIT TO
GET THIS SHOW
ON THE ROAD
!



ALL YOU HAVE
TO DO IS WALK
AROUND...

"TWIST, TURN, SHAKE
YOUR HEAD,
WHATEVER."

WE WANT TO
RECORD HOW YOU
MOVE. JUST BE NATURAL.
BE YOURSELF AND DON'T
WORRY ABOUT HOW
UGLY YOU THINK
THE DRESS LOOKS
ON YOU.

"...IT'S JUST A
GENERIC PIECE OF
CLOTHING SO THE COM-
PUTER CAN GENERATE
AN IMAGE OF HOW
CLOTHES SHOULD
FIT YOU AND
MOVE WITH
YOU."

WE'LL NEVER
ACTUALLY SHOW YOU
IN THAT PARTICULAR DRESS
ANYWAY, WE'LL BE SHOOT-
ING YOU NUDE TOMOR-
ROW, SO DON'T
WORRY ABOUT
IT.



"TURN
AROUND--
NO, FASTER!
SO YOUR
HAIR
TOSSES!"

**FASTER!
FASTER!**
WE NEED TO
HAVE RECORDINGS
OF HOW YOU
MOVE AT ALL
SPEEDS!

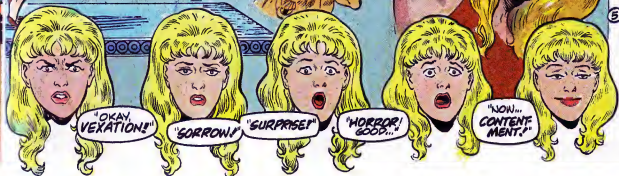


"NEVER MIND
HIM--HE'LL BE
BLUE-SCREENED
OUT LATER! WE
NEED TO KNOW
HOW YOU
KISS!"

"PICK UP
THAT GLASS!
YES..."

I KNOW
IT'S HOT!

I WANT
TO SEE
HOW YOU
SWEAT!



"OKAY,
VERATION!"

"SORROW!"

"SURPRISE!"

"HORROR!
GOOD..."

"NOW...
CONTENT
MENT!"

OKAY, ANGER! I WANT ANGER! GOOD GOOD. NOW HATE! THINK OF SOMETHING OR SOMEONE YOU REALLY HATE!

I NEED HATE!! NO, NO. THAT'S NOT IT!



CUT IT! LET'S TAKE A BREAK AND TRY AGAIN LATER.

YOU LIVE BY YOUR LOOKS, DON'T YOU? YOU KNOW YOU'RE VERY BEAUTIFUL, AND YOU USE IT.

WHAT'S WITH YOU!? WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS LOOKING AT ME STRANGE AND ASKING ME WEIRD QUESTIONS!?



I'M JUST TRYING TO SHOW YOU HOW DEPENDENT YOU ARE ON MEN'S REACTIONS TO YOUR LOOKS. I'M TRYING TO GET YOU TO BE INDEPENDENT.

I AM INDEPENDENT, AND WHY DON'T YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!?



I THINK YOU'RE JEALOUS!!! YOU SIT IN THAT OFFICE OF YOURS EVERY DAY AND SEE PEOPLE USING WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE IT!

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU DON'T TAKE A COMPUGRAPH OF YOUR SECRETARY HERE--WITH HER LOOKS AND PERSONALITY, SHE'D BE PERFECT FOR YOUR HORROR FILMS!



HOW DARE YOU!!!

LET'S TRY "HATE" AGAIN--

I THINK I'VE GOT IT DOWN NOW!

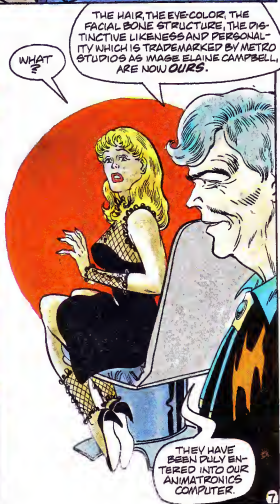
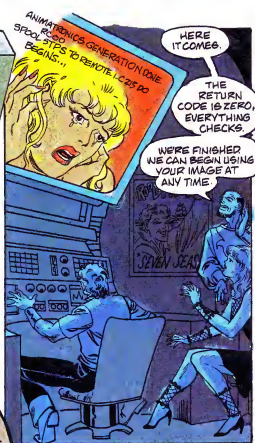
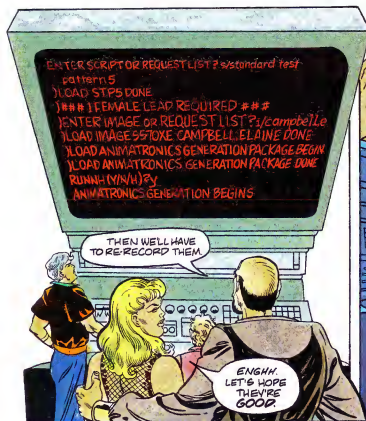


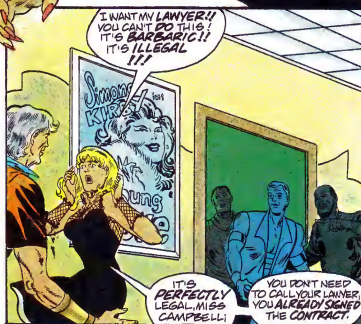
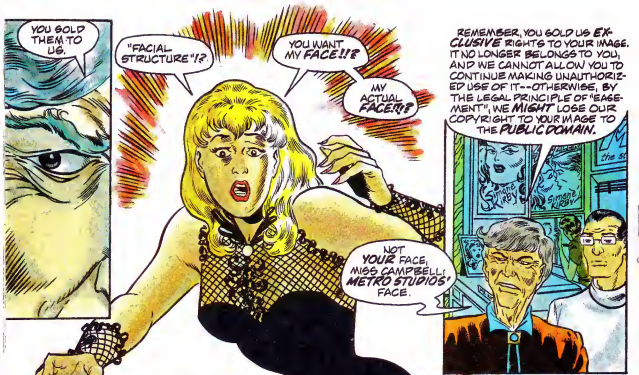
AND SO, FINALLY...

WELL, THE LAST WEEKS OF RECORDINGS HAVE BEEN ENTERED INTO THE COMPUTER'S MEMORY, AND WE'VE ASKED IT TO LOAD A STANDARD TEST SCRIPT. SOON WE'LL KNOW IF THE COMPUGRAPHIC RECORDINGS WE TOOK ARE GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE COMPUTER TO GENERATE A REALISTIC IMAGE OF YOU.

WHAT IF THEY'RE NOT GOOD?

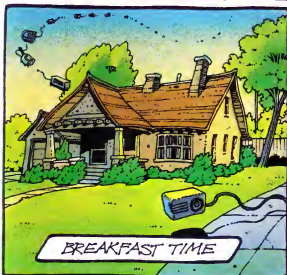




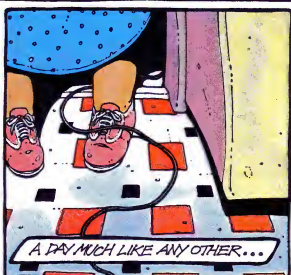


IT HAPPENED THIS MORNING

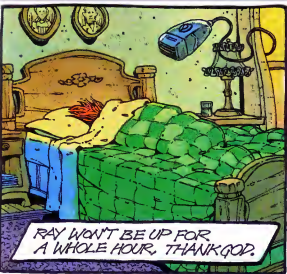
RICK GEARY
©1985



BREAKFAST TIME



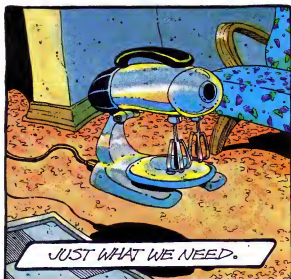
A DAY MUCH LIKE ANY OTHER...



RAY WON'T BE UP FOR
A WHOLE HOUR, THANK GOD.



HERE THEY COME!



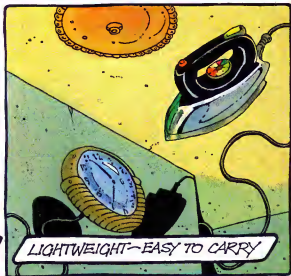
JUST WHAT WE NEED.



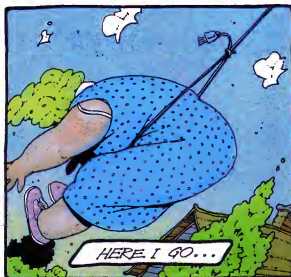
NO HOME SHOULD BE WITHOUT ONE



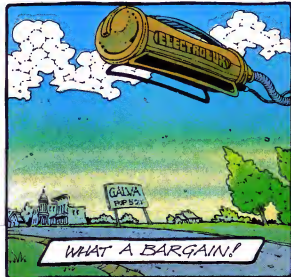
MAKES LIFE NICER, WITHOUT A DOUBT



LIGHTWEIGHT—EASY TO CARRY



HERE I GO...



WHAT A BARGAIN!

PICTURE ME AND YOU

EVER BEEN IN LOVE? DEEPLY IN LOVE?
PROFOUNDLY IN LOVE? SO IN LOVE
THAT YOU WOULDN'T HESITATE EVEN
FOR THE SMALLEST PART OF AN IN-
STANT TO GIVE YOUR LIFE GLADLY FOR
YOUR LOVED ONE? EVER BEEN THAT
MUCH IN LOVE? NEITHER HAVE I.

NOT, AT LEAST,
UNTIL GINA...

STORY: BRUCE JONES
ART: CHUCK BECKUM
LETTERER: WAYNE TRUMAN
COLORIST: RON COURTNEY

BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF. LET ME
START AT THE BEGINNING. THE BEGINNING...
WHERE IS THE BEGINNING? HERE, ON THIS
LONELY STRETCH OF BEACH? NO... THE SAND
AND THE SURF COME LATER; WE HAVE TO GO
FARTHER BACK. THE BEACH IS WHERE I END
ED UP, BUT THE REAL STORY HAS AN
EARLIER INCEPTION...

I'M A PAINTER, AN ILLUSTRATOR. WELL, LET ME QUALIFY THAT: I'M AN ILLUSTRATOR NOW, I HOPE ANYWAY. BUT IN THE BEGINNING -- HA! -- IN THE BEGINNING I COULDN'T GET ARRESTED WITH MY PAINTINGS!



AS ANYONE IN THIS BUSINESS WILL TELL YOU, WHEN YOU'RE ESTABLISHED YOU'RE ESTABLISHED, AND WHEN YOU'RE JUST STARTING OUT... WELL...

...UH-HUH, NICE STUFF, YEAH, THE THING IS, THOUGH, WE AREN'T LOOKING FOR ANY NEW TALENT RIGHT AT THE MOMENT.

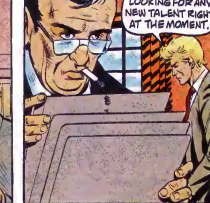
WELL, THANKS ANYWAY...



SCIENCE FICTION WAS MY PASSION. I'D LOVED IT SINCE I WAS A KID. KELLY FREAS, STANLEY MELTZOFF, ALEX SCHOMBURG, I KNEW ALL THE GREAT ARTISTS, EVEN IMITATED THEIR STYLES. TROUBLE WAS, THERE WERE MORE TITLES TO GO TO IN THOSE DAYS...

...UH-HUH, NICE STUFF, YEAH, THE THING IS, THOUGH --

-- YOU AREN'T LOOKING FOR ANY NEW TALENT RIGHT AT THE MOMENT.



WELL, PEOPLE WARNED ME; MY PARENTS, MY FRIENDS. THIS ISN'T THE 40'S, THEY SAID. THIS ISN'T EXACTLY THE GOLDEN AGE OF ILLUSTRATION. KNOW SOMETHING? THEY WERE RIGHT...



EVERYONE HAD ADVICE. GET INTO SOMETHING LUCRATIVE, THEY SAID, SOMETHING WITH A FUTURE. BUT I'M A PAINTER! I EXPLAINED. THEY LAUGHED. ALL EXCEPT MR. CARBONI, MY LANDLORD. HE DIDN'T LAUGH...



WHAT'S THIS? THIS IS EVERYTHING YOU OWN IN THE WORLD, MR. NELSON, ALL NEATLY PACKED AND READY FOR YOU TO TAKE AWAY. YOU GOT EVERYTHING IN THESE SUITCASES BUT MONEY, THAT I COULDN'T FIND NOWHERE.

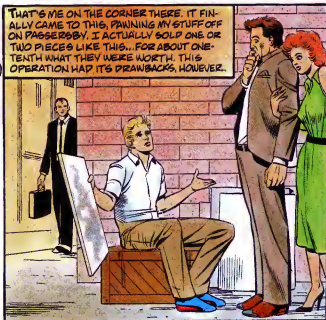


YOU'RE A BRIGHT KID, BROKE, BUT BRIGHT. TWO MONTHS RENT YOU OWE ME, BUT AM I KEEPING YOUR VALUABLES LIKE SOME LANDLORDS WOULD UNTIL YOU PAY UP? NO, NOT ME, BECAUSE I'M A NICE GUY? YES, ALSO BECAUSE, MR. PETE NELSON, YOU AIN'T GOT NOthin' VALUABLE!



TAKE MY ADVICE, MR. PETE NELSON, GIVE UP THIS PAINTING THING, GET INTO SOMETHING MORE LUCRATIVE --

-- SOMETHING WITH A FUTURE. ADVICE I'VE GOT, MR. CARBONI, WHAT I NEED IS A JOB!



THAT'S ME ON THE CORNER THERE. IT FINALLY CAME TO THIS, PAINNING MY STUFF OFF ON PAGESSEBY. I ACTUALLY SOLD ONE OR TWO PIECES LIKE THIS... FOR ABOUT ONE-TENTH WHAT THEY WERE WORTH. THIS OPERATION HAD ITS DRAWBACKS, HOWEVER.



YOU GOT A LICENSE TO SELL THIS STUFF?

OFFICER, I HAVEN'T GOT THE DOUGH FOR A DOG LICENSE!

I GOT MAD THEN. REAL ANGRY. I HID OUT IN CENTRAL PARK AND PAINTED MY TRIBUTE TO NEW YORK'S FINEST. EVERY BRUSHSTROKE WAS A SLASH OF HATRED, A GETTING BACK FOR MONTHS OF HUMILIATION AND PENT-UP FRUSTRATION...



...DIRTY BASTARDS!



I LIKE IT...



IT'S GOT POWER, FEAR! BUT MOST OF ALL IT'S GOT AN OTHERWORLDLY KIND OF REALISM!

I'M MATT BENSON. I'VE GOT A LITTLE INDEPENDENT COMPANY OVER ON WEST 43RD CALLED MAGNUM COMICS. ALL I CAN PAY YOU IS THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS, BUT --

SOLD!



I GUESS THAT'S WHERE IT REALLY BEGAN, WITH THE PUBLICATION OF THAT FIRST COMIC BOOK COVER, AND THAT FIRST MUCH-NEEDED CHECK...

HERE IT IS, PETE, HOT OFF THE PRESS! THE GUYS AROUND THE OFFICE LOVE IT, AND SO DO I!

THANKS, MATT! AND THANKS FOR THE CHECK!

THOSE PLOT-CONSCIOUS READERS WILL NOTICE A DEFINITE PATTERN EMERGING HERE. YES, IT DID LOOK AN AWFUL LOT LIKE THAT COP I PAINTED IN CENTRAL PARK. YES, I DID THINK ABOUT IT THE MY PAINT BRUSH, BE RIGHT AROUND ROCKEFELLER CENTER...



MATT LOVED THE PAINTING. EVERYBODY LOVED THE PAINTING. IT WAS A GOOD PAINTING! I PUSHED ALL OTHER THOUGHTS FROM MY MIND... ALL THOUGHTS BUT GINA...

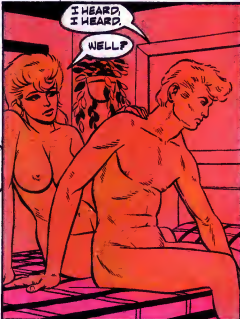
GREAT! TERRIFIC! I WANT IT FOR MAGNUM!



I WANT YOU TO TELL HIM PETE. THIS ISN'T FAIR TO HIM. THIS ISN'T FAIR TO ANYONE. WE CAN'T GO ON LIVING A LIE THIS WAY. I WANT YOU TO TELL HIM.



PETE? DID YOU HEAR ME?

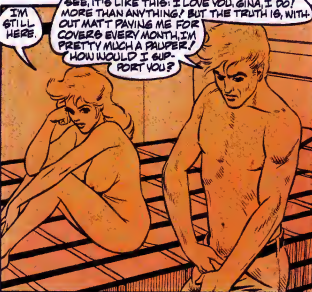


I HEARD, I HEARD.

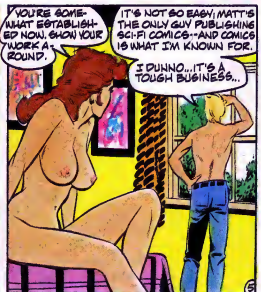
WELL?



SEE, IT'S LIKE THIS: I LOVE YOU, GINA, I DO! MORE THAN ANYTHING! BUT THE TRUTH IS, WITH-
OUT MATT PAYING ME FOR COVERS EVERY MONTH, I'M PRETTY MUCH A PAUPER! HOW WOULD I SUP-
PORT YOU?

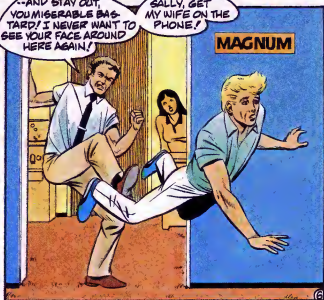
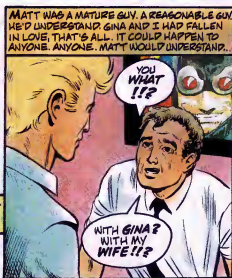
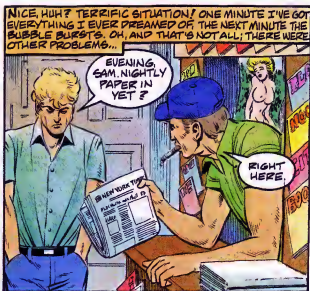
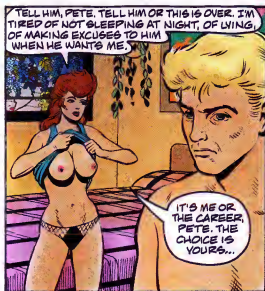


YOU'RE SOME-
WHAT ESTABLISH-
ED NOW. SHOW YOUR
WORK A-
ROUND.

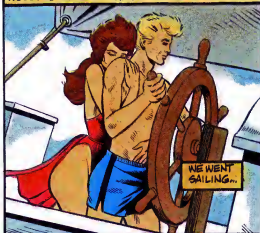


IT'S NOT SO EASY, MATT'S THE ONLY GUY PUBLISHING SCI-FI COMICS--AND COMICS IS WHAT I'M KNOWN FOR.

I DUNNO...IT'S A TOUGH BUSINESS...



AND NOW FOR THE SAD PART. YES, IT GETS WORSE. I TOLD GINA ABOUT MY, AH--"CONVERSATION" WITH MATT. SHE THREW HER ARMS AROUND ME, KISSED ME, TOLD ME SHE LOVED ME. EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE. IT WASN'T.



IT WASN'T MY BOAT, IT BELONGED TO A FRIEND OF GINA'S. SORT OF A PRE-HONEYMOON JAUNT. TWO TURTLE DOWNS ADRIPT ON A SEA OF LOVE. IT WAS ALL SO BEAUTIFUL AND SERENE, I EVEN QUIT WORRYING ABOUT HOW I WOULD SUPPORT US. THEN THE STORM HIT...



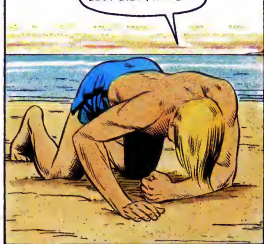
GINA WAS HELPING ME LOWER THE SAIL WHEN THE BIG WAVE STRUCK US...



I CAN'T SWIM. NOT THAT IT WOULD HAVE HELPED MUCH IN THAT SEA. I WAS LUCKY TO GET BACK TO SHORE ALIVE...



GINA... OH GOD, GINA!... (SOB)... I'VE LOST EVERYTHING...



OF COURSE, COMPARED TO THE COP IN CENTRAL PARK AND THE WOMAN IN ROCKEFELLER CENTER, I WASN'T DOING HALF BAD. AND THAT GAVE ME AN IDEA. MY PAINTINGS HAD ALWAYS BEEN A PORTENT OF DOOM.



I STAYED UP ALL NIGHT FINISHING THE PAINTING. IT HAD TO BE SCIENCE FICTION SO MATT WOULD BUY IT, BUT IT HAD TO BE GINA TOO...IT HAD TO BE GINA ALIVE AND BREATHING...



YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND COMING IN HERE, NEL-SON! BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY! DON'T YOU SEE, THE COP GOT EATEN BY THE SPIDER, THE WOMAN GOT BURNED BY THE SAUCER! ONLY FIRST YOU HAVE TO PUBLISH IT! THAT'S THE SECRET!



GET HIM OUT OF HERE! AND CALL THE POLICE! CALL MY ATTORNEY!

IT HAS TO BE ON YOUR COMIC BOOK COVER! THAT'S THE ONLY WAY IT WORKS! PLEASE, LISTEN TO ME!



I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I LOST IT RIGHT ABOUT THEN. I KNEW WITHOUT THE PUBLICATION OF THAT PAINTING GINA WAS GONE, AND I ALSO KNEW THAT MATT THOUGHT I WAS COMPLETELY UNHINGED. MAYBE I WAS. I WENT BACK TO MY STUDIO...



SO, I DID ANOTHER PAINTING. A PAINTING OF FEAR AND FRUSTRATION AND DEEP SEATED HATRED, HATRED OF MATT, OF MYSELF, OF THE WHOLE STINKING TOWN. I TOOK ALL THE ROISON ROILING INSIDE MY GUTS AND POURED IT OUT THROUGH THAT PAINT BRUSH. THEN, I SLEPT...



AND AFTER I SLEPT I WENT FOR A WALK--A DRUNKEN WALK--EVERYWHERE, ANYWHERE, ALL OVER THE CITY, I HIT A LOT OF BARS. I WAS GONE FOR DAYS, MAYBE WEEKS, AND WHEN I STUMBLED BACK HOME, GUESS WHAT WAS WAITING IN MY MAILBOX?



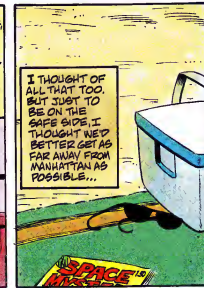
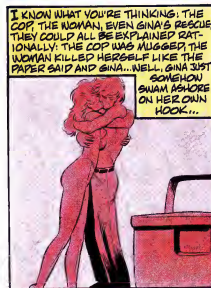
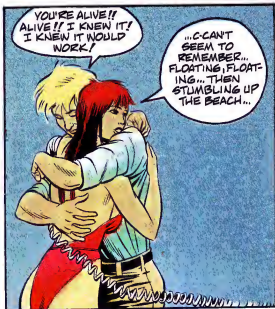
A CHECK? FROM MAGNUM COMICS?

THIS IS PETE NELSON, IS MATT BENSON THERE?

BENSON QUIT A WEEK AGO. THIS IS PAUL WILSON, THE NEW EDITOR. WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU, NELSON. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND--WE DROPPED BY AND PICKED UP YOUR LATEST WORK. THE OCTOPUS-MAN COVER CAME OUT GREAT! IT'S ON THE STANDS NOW, HAVE YOU SEEN IT?



THAT'S WHEN THE KNOCK CAME ON MY DOOR...



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA.

THE MAN LOCKING HIS FRONT DOOR IS JAMES P. HUDNALL. HE CLUTCHES A PACKAGE IN HIS HANDS AS IF IT WERE A SECRET DOCUMENT. HIS EYES MOVE FURTIVELY BEHIND DARK GLASSES, MAKING SURE NO ONE IS WATCHING.

HE'S GLAD THE POST OFFICE IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER...

HE MAKES ALL 500 YARDS OF THE JOURNEY WITHOUT INCIDENT. TEN MINUTES OF WAITING IN LINE BEHIND A GUY WHO SUCKS HIS TEETH IS ALL HE HAS TO ENDURE.

I'D LIKE THIS SENT REGISTERED MAIL, PLEASE.

ENGLAND, HUH? LOOKS INTERESTING! IS IT IMPORTANT?

YEP.

OXFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND. ONE WEEK LATER.

THE PATTERN OF RAIN ON THE ROOF IS THE FIRST THING DAVID LLOYD HEARS AS HE WAKES UP. THEN COMES THE POUNDING ON THE DOOR.

REGISTERED PACKAGE.

WHAT-? OH...THANKS

HE'S BEEN WORKING ON THIS PROJECT FOR SOME MONTHS, AND NOW BEFORE HIM IS THE FINAL SCRIPT.

HE DRINKS IT ALL IN. THEN HE GOES TO WORK...

SOON, VERY SOON, THESE TWO MEN FROM TWO DIFFERENT LANDS WILL UNVEIL A COMIC LIKE NO OTHER. A COMIC THAT MIGHT BE ABOUT YOU OR ME.

ESPERS
(C) 1979, James P. Hudnall

ESPERS...WHAT POWERS ARE REALLY ABOUT.